MONTHLY WILDLAND FIRE WEATHER/FIRE DANGER OUTLOOK

1. REPORTING UNIT: *WGBCC*

2. DATE: 9/27/04

3. POTENTIAL FOR SERIOUS/CRITICAL FIRE PROBLEMS

THIS COMING MONTH	BELOW NORMAL	X	NORMAL	X	ABOVE NORMAL	
THIS SEASON	BELOW NORMAL		NORMAL	X	ABOVE NORMAL	

COMMENTS: Overall temperatures for the month of September have ranged from above normal in the west to slightly below normal in the east. Precipitation has been normal to above normal for much of the eastern half of the state and much below normal across the western half of the state. The typical summer ridge of high pressure broke down earlier than usual this year as a series of strong storms passed mainly to the north of Nevada. Winds and dry weather were the norm across northwestern Nevada, while parts of the northeast would get clipped by the tail ends of the systems to our north. A late season surge of monsoonal moisture to southern Nevada brought significant amounts of rainfall to the mountains, while the valleys saw less. Around the third week of September, a strong 'Fall' storm dug into the Great Basin bringing the season's first snow to many of the higher mountains and some wetting rainfall to many valley locations across northern Nevada. A quieter weather pattern will persist over the state for the next several days before a return to some unsettled weather by month's end. There are early indications that an El Nino may be beginning to form.

4. FIRE WEATHER FACTORS:

CURRENT DROUGHT CONDITIONS:

None		MODERATE	X	SEVERE	X	EXTREME	X

The most recent 12-month Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) for Nevada, valid through the end of August 2004, is "below normal". A better reflection of actual long-term (past several years) drought conditions, however, is found in the U.S. Drought Monitor (valid September 14, 2004), which portrays a wide range of drought conditions for Nevada: "extreme" drought in a band from the northwestern corner of the state to our southeastern border with Utah (including much of the Sierra Front), "severe" drought along our southwestern border with California and parts of the northeast, and "moderate" drought in much of the northeastern corner of the state. Drought impact has changed very little in the last few months, with the exception of dryness in the far western parts of the state elevating the level of drought in the Sierra Front from "moderate" to "severe". The U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook from the National Centers for Environmental Prediction expects the current drought situation to persist through December 2004, but there will be some areas of limited improvement across northern and western Nevada.

TEMPERATURE/PRECIPITATION OUTLOOK:

OCTOBER PRECIPITATION		OCTOBER TEMPERATURES		PAST 4 WEEKS PRECIPITATION		PAST 4 WEEKS TEMPERATURES	
BELOW		BELOW	X	BELOW	X	BELOW	X
NORMAL	X	NORMAL	X	NORMAL	X	NORMAL	X
ABOVE		ABOVE		ABOVE	X	ABOVE	X

Precipitation anomalies and outlook:

Conditions in the Pacific Ocean and sea surface temperature anomalies seem to support a general trough of low pressure across the western United States. At this time of year, the tendency in a pattern such as this is for troughs to move southeast from Alaska toward the eastern half of the Great Basin. A storm track of this nature would bring 3-4 storms across northern Nevada during the month of October, with one or two days of light to moderate precipitation followed by a week or more of dry days between each successive storm system. The developing El Nino likely will not be strong enough yet to add significant amounts of moisture or energy to these first early "wet season" storms, though by November and through much of the remaining winter the effects of the oncoming El Nino will have a much greater influence on these types of Pacific storms.

Temperature anomalies and outlook:

A general trough of low pressure across the eastern Great Basin will result in northwesterly flow aloft and north or northeasterly flow at the surface. This type of flow pattern will easily support a forecast of normal to below normal temperatures across the state. The best chances for normal temperatures will once again occur across the western half of the state, while further east below normal temperatures will be more common.

5. CURRENT FUELS CONDITIONS:

Live fuel moisture values in the conifers have begun their typical seasonal fall-off as the Fall season approaches. The concern now is how many more areas will be affected by the Ips beetle infestations. From a fire behavior aspect, the Lincoln County pinyon/juniper lands are at risk along with the dry ponderosa stands in Clark, Douglas, Carson and Washoe Counties.

There has been enough precipitation (duration and amount) to increase the live fuel moisture content of the perennial grasses and sagebrush in Elko County and most northern portions of Lander, Eureka and White Pine Counties. Some areas of concern continue to exist for sagebrush foliar moisture in the Carson, Winnemucca, Tonopah, and Las Vegas Field Office areas. Annual fine fuels are currently in a cured state across the area.

FINE - GRASS STAGE	PRE-GREEN		GREEN		CURED	X
NEW GROWTH	SPARSE		NORMAL	X	ABOVE NORMAL	

LIVE FUEL MOISTURE (sage, deciduous, conifer):

Measured Values

Sagebrush
Elko 80-110%
Winnemucca 75-110%
Carson City 75-125%
Ely 60-130%
Las Vegas 90-100%
Battle Mountain 70-900%

Conifers
Battle Mountain 120-130%
Carson City 135%

1000 Hour Fuel Moisture
Northwestern Nevada 6%
Central 6%
Southern Nevada 12%

Normal/Average Fuel Moisture for This Time of Year
Elko N 80-100%
Winnemucca 75-90%
Carson City 80-120%
Ely 75-110%
Las Vegas 75-110%
Battle Mountain 60-100%

6. AVERAGE FIRE OCCURRENCE/ACRES BURNED (to date 5 year average): 932 Fires/ 584,417 Acres Burned

7. ACTUAL OCCURRENCE/ACRES BURNED (to date this year): 933 Fires/ 42,888 Acres Burned

8. PRESCRIBED FIRE / WILDFIRE BEHAVIOR

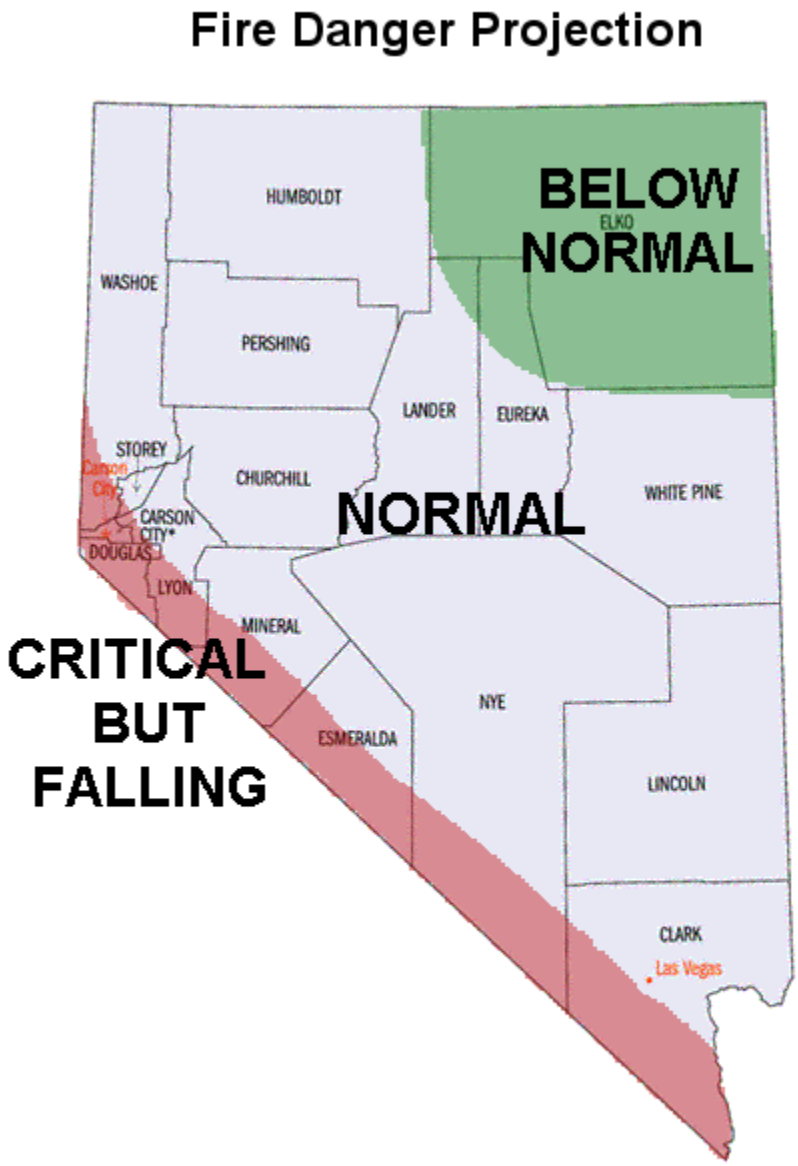
No new information.

9. WRITTEN SUMMARY

As of September 27, fire danger (as measured by ERC Fuel Model G values) was below the critical level across much of northern and eastern Nevada, while the Sierra Front and the lower elevations of western and southern Nevada were normal to critical. This is well above normal for the Sierra Front and normal to below normal for the rest of the state, reflecting September's surges of moisture and the continued effect of the long term drought on the heavier fuels of the Sierra Front. The likelihood of more storms through October will cause fire danger to continue to fall through the month with many areas currently at "Critical" falling to a more normal range for this time of year.

The "Critical" level of ERC values is labeled that way on our Fire Danger Projection map because of its high correlation with large fire outbreaks. However, even in Critical fire danger areas, large fire potential during October is generally diminished as shorter burn periods, cooler temperatures and limited or no occurrence of dry lightning will keep most ignitions as singular events where suppression efforts will be successful. Any large fires which do occur during this upcoming month are likely to be limited to areas with significant fine fuel loadings on windy and dry days.

10. LARGE FIRE POTENTIAL MAP



11. EXPECTED FIRE DANGER MAP